

**THE UNDERSTANDING OF CHANNEL ONE BY  
SIXTH AND EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS**

**by**

**Alta Jo La Fitte**

**THESIS**

**Presented to the Faculty of  
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**APPROVED BY THESIS COMMITTEE**

  
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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the 1992-93 students of La Porte Junior High School. Thank you not only for participating in this study, but also for making each day I spent with you as a substitute teacher enjoyable. . I would like to say a special thank you to Mr. Richard Hays, Mr. Larry Cox, and the Faculty and Staff of LPJH.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the following persons for their assistance and support:

- Jesus Christ for the strength and inspiration to complete this work (Matthew 10:20)
- Dr. Sharon Hall and Dr. Gail Cheramie without whom this work would never have been completed
- My parents, Jim and Charlene, for their endless understanding and support. You believed in me when I did not believe in myself
- My family for their patience  
and
- Ryan and Jeff Holzaepfel for helping me retain the ability to laugh at myself throughout this project.

December 1993

**ABSTRACT**

**THE UNDERSTANDING OF CHANNEL ONE BY**

**SIXTH AND EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS**

**Alta Jo La Fitte, M.A.**

**The University of Houston-Clear Lake, 1993**

**Thesis Chair: Sharon K. Hall**

Sixth and eighth grade students' understanding of the in-school program Channel One was assessed in relation to their grade in school, academic achievement and their family's household income. It was found that the student's grade and academic achievement was related to their understanding of Channel One, but income was not. It was also found that the students understood the items on the program's specific content at a greater rate than the commercials, which are a source of controversy.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iv
ABSTRACT .....	v
Chapter	
I. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	
Televised socialization .....	1
Channel One .....	6
II. METHOD	
Subjects .....	18
Materials .....	19
Procedure .....	19
Measures .....	20
III. RESULTS	
Grade .....	21
Academic Achievement .....	22
Demographic Variability .....	23
Question Category .....	24
IV. DISCUSSION	
APPENDIX A .....	30
APPENDIX B .....	32
APPENDIX C .....	33
REFERENCES .....	39

## THE UNDERSTANDING OF CHANNEL ONE BY SIXTH AND EIGHTH GRADE STUDENTS

Television has become the medium by which Americans know their world. Foreign news, U.S. politics, fashion, music, entertainment and fads are broadcast into most every home, as 98% of American homes have at least one television set (Stroman, 1991). Therefore, television has become a reference for how one's life should proceed. Stroman (1991) calls this vicarious socialization, when one is given values through a non-experiential medium. When compared to other means of value achievement, children spend more time with a television set than they do in formal education (Stroman, 1991). Channel One is a television program designed to present current events to children in the classroom, but includes commercials as well. This 12 minutes of classroom television daily may seem inconsequential, but the following data concerning this medium supports the need to examine Channel One further.

Televised socialization

According to the National Endowment for Children Educational Television Act of 1989, 42 million children in America watch from 11 to 28 hours of television at

home per week (United States Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, 1989). Schilling and McAlister (1990) state that 70% of 12-17 year olds watch television in excess of three hours a day. Other research states that children from lower income families rely on television more for information than other forms of news media (United States Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, 1989). Shapley (1991) suggests that 50% of students watch more than three hours of television on school nights, and 20% watch more than five hours per school night.

African-American children spend more than 40 hours a week watching television (Stroman, 1991).

The time spent watching television is not idle. The programs children watch are teaching them values (vicarious socialization), and the content of the programs is increasingly more violent. Each children's weekend program contains 25 violent acts whereas prime time programming contains only five to six incidents of violence. This is five times more violence in programming targeted at children than adults (Condry & Scheibe, 1991).

Another concern is that the characters do not offer equal role models for both sexes. Often the characters



are based on traditional sex roles. It has been suggested that programmers view children's television as a male world because girls are willing to watch a male leading character, but boys will not watch a female one. The different races and ethnicities are often underrepresented as well. Although African-American characters may be present, all other minorities have few characters to represent them (Condry & Scheibe, 1991). Condry and Scheibe (1991) also state that 20% of each hour of children's weekend programming is non-program content, most of which is product commercials.

Advertising teaches values by showing viewers that one idea, concept, job or group is better than another (Wulfemeyer & Mueller, 1990). Research has shown that values are the most powerful influence on people's purchasing behavior, and advertising's target is to tell viewers what to value (Wulfemeyer & Mueller, 1990). Wulfemeyer and Mueller (1990) suggest that advertising creates materialistic children. Abstractions such as integrity or honesty are not valued because they cannot be touched, as can a new toy (Wulfemeyer & Mueller, 1990).

As an institution imbedded in the mass media, advertising's influence on values and behavior is

pervasive (Wulfemeyer & Mueller, 1990). Advertising uses cultural values to show that: (a) a product has certain values (b) can help the purchaser attain these values or (c) is associated with these values (Wulfemeyer & Mueller, 1990). Advertising techniques such as these are effective, especially for children and adolescents.

Concern about commercials targeting children prompted a 1974 Federal Communications Commission (FCC) policy regulation regarding child-directed advertising (Kunkle, 1988). However, in 1984, in an effort to de-regulate, the FCC lifted its restrictions on advertising during children's programming (Kunkle, 1988). The U.S. Court of Appeals supported a case against the FCC because the court had been given no explanation supporting the FCC's decision to de-regulate (Kunkle, 1988).

In addition, television in recent years has assumed the role of educator as well as socializer. The National Endowment for Children's Educational Television Act of 1989 suggests that children are cognitively active during television viewing and try to understand its content (United States Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, 1989). Using this concept

as a springboard, three programs have been developed to enhance children's education and academic skills. These are **Sesame Street**, **3-2-1 Contact**, and **The Electric Company**. **Sesame Street** has been shown to enrich skills across age, gender, socioeconomic and language groups (Sammur, 1990). The skills taught include naming letters and numbers, counting, vocabulary increases and some pro-social behavior (Sammur, 1990).

**The Electric Company** has been shown to increase students reading skills (Sammur, 1990). It has also been shown that those at the bottom half of their 2nd-4th grade classes in reading skills made significant advances. First grade students had increased reading ability as well, but they are not included in the target audience. It was found that those within the target audience had greater increases in reading skills than those in the non-target audience (National Endowment for Children's Educational Television Act of 1989). Likewise, **3-2-1 Contact** has been shown to increase children's knowledge of science (Sammur, 1990).

Condry and Scheibe (1991) suggest that there has been a decline in the number of programs that could be classified as educational. However, there is an increase in the use of television in the classroom.

About 97% of American schools have access to VCR equipment (Gotthelf & Peel, 1990). Therefore, television is a tool for use in classroom situations.

### Channel One

A new idea by Whittle Communications is inspiring educators to rethink and redefine television's role in the classroom. Whittle has created a 12 minute news program to be shown in the schools known as Channel One. This is a morning news magazine style program, with features such as "FAST FACTS" and "POP QUIZZES." Whittle provides the schools with the necessary hardware such as: 19 inch television sets, a satellite dish, the necessary wiring and VCRs (Wulfemeyer & Mueller, 1990). The schools agree to show Channel One to the students daily (Wulfemeyer & Mueller, 1990). The contract with Whittle excludes the use of the hardware for any of the other in-school news programs and states that the students will watch Channel One (Saunier & Cohen, 1992). These schools are allowed to preview each Channel One segment, and have the option of not broadcasting any program considered to be objectionable. The other programs offered by the sub-corporation, Whittle Educational Network, of which Channel One is a part, are optional and each

school may choose only the programs that are beneficial to its students (United States Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, 1991). Some schools have expanded the network by tapping into their local cable services and others have created in-school broadcasting by incorporating video cameras into the existing system (United States Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, 1991). The Whittle Educational Network has invested 150 million dollars to make this technology available to schools which makes it the largest introduction of television into the classroom to date (United States Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, 1991).

Whittle Communications and The Whittle Educational Network are owned by Christopher Whittle. It is his goal to help in the "uplifting of 6.5 million teenagers into cultural literacy" (Hammer, 1990, p. 52). Whittle claims that Channel One is an excellent tool for teaching students who think "the Ayatolla Khomeini is a Russian gymnast" (Hammer, 1990, 52). He feels that America's schools are not preparing their students to be participants in the new global economy (Carlin, Quinones & Yonker, 1992; McNichol, 1992). One researcher (McNichol, 1992) has suggested

that Whittle's concern for the nation's schools seems to be sincere. Whittle has stated that Channel One has five educational goals: (a) to enhance cultural literacy (b) to promote critical thinking (c) to provide a common language and shared experience (d) to provide relevance and motivation and (e) to strengthen character (Haney, 1989).

The most recent information states that over 10,000 schools have contracted with Channel One, and 3,000 more are expected by the Fall of 1993. Whittle's hope is that the introduction of new technology into the classroom will help teachers in their efforts to educate America's students (United States Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, 1991). However, Chris Whittle and Whittle Educational Network have not been universally accepted by the educational community. The most publicized arenas for the Channel One debate have been New York, New Jersey and California (Donaton, 1992; West, 1992).

To fund the new programs, the Whittle Educational Network has sold two minutes of air time on the Channel One program for commercials. Channel One is the only program that must be shown to the student. Therefore, these commercials are assured of a

captive audience of no less than 6.5 million students every day (United States Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, 1991; Wulfemeyer & Mueller, 1990). More recent reports estimate the daily viewership to be approximately 8 million (Donaton, 1992). Whittle sees this as a partnership between the business and educational communities (Wulfemeyer & Mueller, 1990). He asserts that money which would otherwise go to finance movies, situation comedies and sporting events is now being funneled into the educational system (United States Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, 1991). The commercials on Channel One have been challenged because many of America's educators feel that it is nothing more than exploiting students for monetary gain (Southwest Educational Development Lab., 1990). Whittle received \$100 million in advertising revenues from Channel One in 1991.

Some researchers oppose commercials in the classroom because they are being shown to a captive audience. Reilly (1989) and Zuckerman (1989) state that the Whittle Communications staff knows these students will be there everyday to watch the commercials, therefore they can assure the advertisers of a security for their investment which is not found in the open

broadcast market. However, the National Education Association has stated that only 40% of students who are being shown the material actually watch the program (Donaton, 1992). Wulfemeyer and Mueller (1990) and Rist (1989) are concerned because the commercials on Channel One are targeting adolescent students.

Rist's concerns are based on adolescent purchasing behavior. The products that adolescents buy are one avenue of proving they belong in their society. The 28 million adolescents in the United States spend \$78 billion annually, of which \$33 billion is their own money (Rist, 1989). Rist is also concerned that as adolescents are trendsetters, using advertising that targets adolescents is exploitive. What the adolescents are wearing, seeing and hearing becomes more desirable to the adult population as well (Rist, 1989). Also, adolescents are developing loyalties to different brand name products. The use of advertising meant to target adolescents insures the future of these products (Rist, 1989).

Wulfemeyer and Mueller (1990) are concerned about the values portrayed in commercials. In many of Channel One's advertisements, minorities were non-existent and the products shown were depicted as



valuable because they enhanced one's social status (Wulfemeyer & Mueller, 1990).

Channel One does have public service announcements (PSA's) as well as commercials. However, television has not been proven to be the best method for this type of intervention (Schilling & McAlister, 1990). Drug use is the most popular subject for PSA's, and research reveals the messages are only effective when they offer factual information and real consequences (Mayton, Nagel & Parker, 1990). However, one researcher found that adolescent viewers of Channel One reported that they had given more attention to the announcements at school than those viewed at home (Chase, 1989).

Whittle feels that the commercials are not the issue; that they are being shown to teenagers who are wise to the purpose and forms of advertising because of their vast experience with television (Rudinow, 1990). However, Gottlieb (1991) has found that viewing television advertising may make adolescents more susceptible to advertising claims. Others have suggested that children need to learn how to recognize and analyze advertising content and Channel One's commercials may be a method for achieving this

understanding (Southwest Educational Development Lab of Austin, Texas, 1990; Shapley, 1991). Children's understanding of Channel One advertising is not known, however.

Although advertising is the major source of criticism from the educational community, it is not the only basis upon which some have rejected Whittle's Channel One. The schools have the right to preview the programs for offensive material, but each teacher does not have this right, which denies teachers the opportunity to decide if the program is of educational value or if it will augment the curriculum (Hoing, 1990). There is no control over the content by the educators (Saunier & Cohen, 1992). Hoing (1990) states that schools who subscribe to Channel One have put themselves in an awkward situation. They may either watch Channel One with no discussion and waste the 12 minutes of the program or they may use Channel One as a springboard for discussions and let the program dictate the school's curriculum (Hoing, 1990).

Shapley (1991) suggests that the television news programs in general do not have a substantial effect on high school students or their knowledge of current events. Chira (1992) supports this by stating that

without discussion, news programs cover material too quickly and sporadically to improve student's knowledge of current events.

If students view an educational broadcast such as Channel One or Sesame Street only once, with no follow-up, discussion or additional curriculum-based exercises, then the amount of learning that takes place is minimal (United States Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, 1991). One study has suggested that there has been some positive results after viewing Channel One in the knowledge of geography and these same researchers suggested that the minimal results could be explained in part by the lack of follow-up by the teachers (Carlin, Quinones & Yonker, 1992). Other research has divided the Channel One program into three categories: current events knowledge, geography skills and attitudes about commercials. It was found that the only improvement the students made was in geography skills (Thompson, Carl & Hill, 1992). Another study, which assessed Channel One's content and commercials separately, found that senior high students felt that the vocabulary of the program was too low (Ehman, 1991). A University of Michigan study has shown the impact of Channel One on the knowledge of current events of

students who viewed Channel One for a year was minimal (Chira, 1992). Research has also shown the greatest improvement in understanding current events was with the brighter students (Chira, 1992). However, Saloman and Leigh (1984) found the opposite effect in their research -- that the children of lower cognitive abilities had improved success with television as a teaching tool. While it is possible that academic achievement and the knowledge gained from Channel One is related, controversy supports the need to investigate this relationship further.

In support of Channel One, Singer and Singer (1983) suggest that children can learn from television, but without adult supervision and discussion, much of that learning can be harmful. If the program is not specifically designed for the age-range of its audience, it could harm the cognitive development of that audience (Singer & Singer, 1983). The National Endowment for Children's Educational Television Act of 1989 also suggests age-specificity. It notes that children's programming is at its best when it focuses on a particular age and skill for enhancement (United States Senate Committee on Commerce, science and transportation, 1989).

This suggests another question that must be addressed concerning Channel One. If educational television is most effective when it is age-specific, what then is the target age for the Channel One audience? According to Laura Eshbaugh, Vice-Chairman of Whittle Communications, Channel One is designed for a "teenage audience" (United States Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, 1991). Another Whittle employee, William Rukeyser (1989), states that school districts with at least one high school of 500 or more students is eligible to receive Channel One in all of its middle/junior high and high schools. Children in these grades could range from age 11 to 18, depending on the school district.

It seems the age-specificity of Channel One's news content has never been questioned. The Southwest Educational Development Lab of Austin suggests that the program itself is not a cause for concern (1991). Wulfemeyer and Mueller state that there have been few objections to the content of Channel One's news (1990). Some schools do not find the advertising offensive and feel that Channel One is what the students need to help them grasp a knowledge of the world (Hammer, 1990).

Interviews with students revealed wide support for Whittle's venture (Chase, 1989). They seemed to enjoy the programming and communicated a heightened interest in the broadcasting of Channel One. The students repeatedly stated that the commercials were not a problem for them and that advertisements were often ignored (Chase, 1989). However, all of the students interviewed were in high school. Middle/Junior high school students are viewing the program as well.

Developmentally, children's cognitive ability alone could range from a concrete operational understanding of material to a mature, abstract thinker (Gruber & Voneche, 1977). Using Piaget's model of cognitive development, the early years of middle/junior high school would be characterized as on the borderline of concrete and formal operational thought. Concrete operations is classified as being able to see only the real (Blasi & Hoeffel, 1974). There is a shift in the focus of thought from the real to the possible, which marks the beginning of formal operations. The shift opens the thought processes to new concepts such as future time, the need for a life plan, symbolism and social/political structures (Blasi & Hoeffel, 1974; Gruber & Voneche, 1977).

Channel One is said to be for all of these age ranges. Yet, no data supports this idea as little is known about grade level and the understanding of Channel One. As stated in Chira's report (1992), the brighter students exhibited an increased knowledge of current events. Therefore, a student's "brightness", as measured by academic achievement, may influence his/her understanding of Channel One. It is also unknown to what extent children understand the commercial advertising content. Further, while Channel One uses an equal amount of male and female reporters, it is not known if gender or the ethnicity of the reporter is related to reporter preference. These questions are important for future decisions concerning the use of Channel One.

The purpose of this study was to address issues of (a) children's understanding of Channel One news material and the relationship with children's grade, gender, income and prior academic achievement (b) children's understanding of Channel One's commercials as compared with its news content (c) children's preferences concerning Channel One reporters.

## METHOD

### Subjects

The subjects were 32 students from the sixth and eighth grades of a predominately white, middle-class suburban junior high school. The subjects were recruited from the total sixth and eighth grade populations. The sixth grade sample had a mean age of 12 with 5 males and 12 females. The eighth grade sample had a mean age of 14 with 5 males and 10 females.

They participated on a voluntary basis and parental permission was required for inclusion in the study. Parental permission was also required to obtain the subjects' standardized achievement test scores from the students' most recent evaluation. See Appendices A and B for the parental and student consent forms.

### Materials

A copy of the Channel One program was made on December 4, 1992. This was obtained at the school where the study was conducted with the full knowledge of the superintendent of the district and the principal of the school.

### Procedure

The subjects were examined in two groups based on their reported grade. The study was conducted at the



subjects' school, and the subjects were removed from class to participate. The subjects were taken to a room not used for regular class instruction. However, the room was equipped with a Channel One monitor. The subjects were allowed to seat themselves anywhere in the room, provided they could see the monitor. There were chairs and tables, but many subjects chose to sit on the floor.

The subjects were instructed to watch the taped Channel One program carefully, even if they did not normally do so. They were given the questionnaire and asked to complete the demographic information. They then viewed the Channel One tape, and answered questions concerning the tape content and some demographic information.

### Measures

The subjects completed a questionnaire of 36 items that addressed material discussed on Channel One. See Appendix C for the questionnaire which was administered. The subjects' understanding of (a) specific content, (b) concepts imbedded in the taped program, (c) vocabulary and (d) the commercials was addressed. Content questions were specific details that the program had addressed in its news segments, such as "Where are the

'U.N.' headquarters?." Concept questions were words or phrases that the program used without any explanation. For example, phrases such as "separation of church and state" and "founding father" were used with no explanation of their meaning. Vocabulary questions were words used by the reporters that possibly were difficult for the subjects, e.g. "vague" or "chaos". The questions which addressed the commercials asked the subjects specific details about the content of the commercials, such as which fast food restaurant was advertised. Academic achievement was obtained through the use of a standardized score from the subject's most recent school record. The reporter preference was obtained by requesting the subjects to choose a favorite reporter from those on the taped Channel One segment.

### RESULTS

The major hypothesis was that student's understanding of Channel One would be affected by their grade and/or their academic achievement. As predicted, the subjects' grade in school (6th or 8th) and their measure of academic achievement was related to the total items they responded to correctly.

### Grade

The children's grade level and number of correct responses were found to be correlated, as was evidenced by a Pearson product moment correlation coefficient ( $r = .4527(32)$ ,  $p < .01$ ). A t-test comparison of the mean items responded to correctly by each grade level, with possible correct items being 33, supported this with the eighth grade mean ( $M = 29.2667$ ) being significantly higher than the sixth grade mean ( $M = 26.1765$ ), ( $t(30) = 2.76$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

### Academic Achievement

It was also hypothesized that the children's academic achievement would be related to their understanding of Channel One. A Pearson product moment correlation coefficient between the total correct responses and the measure of academic achievement was significant with  $r = .4527(32)$ ,  $p < .01$ .

To further investigate these results, a multiple regression equation was examined with the total number of items correct as the dependent variable and subjects' grade and achievement test scores as predictor variables. This revealed a relationship between these three variables with  $R^2 = .30142$ ,  $p < .01$  with grade contributing to the variance at  $p < .003$  and academic

achievement at  $p < .05$ . The older children (8th grade) and those with higher standard achievement scores were more likely to have a higher number of items answered correctly.

### Demographic Variability

The subject's socioeconomic status was expected to influence understanding of Channel One. This was not supported with a chi-square with the total items correct and the subject's household income. It is probable that the homogeneity of the respondents contributed to this lack of significance.

Previous researchers have voiced concerns over gender and ethnicity bias on television in general. While the diversity of the portrayals of people on the news segments and in the commercials was not assessed, a t-test was completed to investigate the relationship between the subject's gender and the total items correct. The results were not significant with the mean responses correct approximately equal for males and females.

While the portrayals of differing ethnicities was not assessed, the questionnaire included an item which asked the subjects to list the reporter from Channel One who they would most like to emulate. The ethnicities of

the reporters were as follows: one white male, one white female, one black male and one Asian female. One chi-square was completed on gender and reporter preference with a resulting  $\chi^2(4 \ N = 32) = 18.19152$ ,  $p < .001$ , with all but one of the females choosing the Asian female as their favorite. The chi-square completed on ethnicity and reporter preference was not significant.

### Question Category

To examine the extent to which children understand the commercial advertising, a chi-square for the type of item (content, concept, vocabulary or commercial) by the correct number of responses was completed  $\chi^2(3, \ N = 1056) = 11.39948$ ,  $p < .01$ . This suggests that the type of item was related to whether or not the subjects answered it correctly. The percentage correct for these types of items were the following: (a) Content = 43.6% (b) Commercial = 21.0% (c) Concept = 19.9% (d) Vocabulary = 15.6%.

## DISCUSSION

Channel One and junior high aged students' understanding of that program were the focus of this study. The influence of the subjects' grade level, academic achievement and income were investigated in

relation to the number of items responded to correctly on a questionnaire concerning the program. The commercials and the content of the program were compared to reveal the subjects' understanding of each.

It was found that those children with a higher grade level had a greater understanding of the Channel One program. The eighth grade students' better understanding of the program supports Piaget's model of cognitive development as interpreted by Blasi and Hoeffel (1974) and Gruber and Voneche (1977). However, both groups of junior high aged subjects understood the program well, with the eighth grade students correctly responding to 88% of the items whereas the sixth grade students responded to 79% of the items correctly.

Saloman and Leigh (1984) found that children gave more attention to televised programs if they knew they were viewing it for an academic purpose. Accordingly, the subjects of this study were asked to give the program their full attention. The focus of the study was to investigate the subjects' understanding of the Channel One program when the students were cued to attend to its content. This instruction was given being cognizant of the research suggesting that many students do not attend to the program during its normal air time.

As hypothesized, the children with higher academic achievement were found to understand Channel One at a greater rate than those of lower academic achievement. This evidence supports Chira's report (1992) that the brighter students gained more knowledge of current events from viewing Channel One.

It was hypothesized that those children with higher socioeconomic status (as measured by income) would have a greater understanding of Channel One. This was not supported by the statistical analysis of the data. One explanation for this result is the homogeneity of subjects' income, virtually all were middle class. Gender was examined as a possible influence on the number of correct responses on the questionnaire but it was not found to be a significant variable. However, gender was a factor in which reporter the subjects chose as their favorite. On the day the program was taped for the study, there were four reporters. The Asian female was the reporter most often selected as the favorite of the females. However, no males chose her as the favored reporter. The Asian female is on the show daily and rarely leaves the newsdesk, which could account for the overwhelming choice of her as the females' favored reporter.

The remaining questionnaire items were divided into four categories which reflected the structure of the program. The hypothesis was that the commercials would be understood at a rate that was as great or greater than that of the news content items. It was found that the content items were understood better than the commercials, but the concept and vocabulary questions were understood less than the commercials. It was surprising that the items understood least were the vocabulary items in that this researcher viewed the concept items to be more difficult. However, the results suggest that these children's understanding of concepts may have been influenced by the larger contextual pattern. For example, the use of the concept "founding father" was accompanied by portraits of George Washington and Ben Franklin which gave visual clues to which response would be correct.

This finding reveals a characteristic of Channel One that is in need of further research. The subjects of this study were junior high students, and they had difficulty with the vocabulary of the program. However, as previously mentioned, one study found that senior high students found the vocabulary of Channel One to be too low of a level for their needs (Ehman, 1992). In



this study, Channel One was understood best by the older children, but the data revealed that all the students understood the program moderately well.

Whittle Communications spokespersons have stated that Channel One is for an audience ranging from sixth to twelfth grades. With this range, it would be very difficult for this or any program to fulfill all the needs of its audience. The National Endowment for Children's Educational Television Act has stated that programs are the most effective when they are age-specific (1989). Therefore, it could be more beneficial to design two Channel One programs: one for the junior high schools and one for the senior high schools. However, designing two programs would be futile if the teachers do not use the program, which is the case at present (Ehman, 1991). Again, future research should explore teacher variables vis a vis this programming.

Channel One has been a source of much controversy, and it would seem reasonable that researchers and educators must at some point evaluate Channel One with an ethical perspective. Channel One's advertising is target specific, and Channel One is responsible for a large portion (40%) of Whittle

Communications commercial revenues (Konrad, 1992). The attainment of Whittle's educational goals with this programming may be influenced by these economics. There is also the question of how long Whittle's goals will be upheld. For example, Time, Inc. purchased 50% of Whittle Communications' stock in 1988, with the option of purchasing up to 80% in 1993. Time, Inc. has recently received censure from the public for its support of negative images in media consumed by children. Developments like the Time, Inc. purchase must be monitored by educators who subscribe to Channel One and by researchers to assess any changes in its programming.

Future studies of this nature should investigate the understanding of the program by students from all levels of the target audience. Research could also be conducted on the emotional responses that many news items evoke and how the students process them. Further academic study could investigate the effect of the learning environment on the acceptance of ideas, i.e. does a school environment lend credence to any material presented? The extent to which teachers may facilitate learning with this program is also unexplored. These

factors need to be investigated to clarify the effectiveness of Channel One.

## Appendix A

### CONSENT FORM: Project on students' comprehension of Channel One

Dear Parent or Guardian:

A study is being conducted by investigators from the University of Houston-Clear Lake with the approval of La Porte I.S.D. This study is being done to fulfill the requirements of a Master's thesis. The study will take place on April 14, 1993 in the sixth and eighth grades. We request your permission to have your child take part.

The purpose of this study is to assess students' perceptions of Channel One. Your child's responses will be used only as one unit of a group of data. All personally identifying information will be removed before the information is entered into the computers.

We would be grateful to have your permission to have your child participate. We also seek your permission to obtain your child's scores from his or her last standardized achievement test. Participation in this study is strictly voluntary and future relations with the school or University will not be affected by not taking part.

If you consent, please sign this letter and have your child return it to his or her teacher. Please keep the yellow copy for future reference.

We will also be seeking your child's consent, in accordance with the policies concerning conduct of research. The questions will be explained before the questionnaires are given out and each child's agreement will be sought. Your child will be given the opportunity to withdraw from the project at any time without penalty.

Please call one of us if you have any questions.

Prof. Sharon Hall  
Dept. of Psychology, Univ. of Houston, Clear Lake  
(713-283-3436)

Alta Jo La Fitte  
(713-471-5016)

---

By my signature below I give my permission to have  
\_\_\_\_\_ take part in the study  
described above.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B**

**Student Consent Form**

**Dear Student:**

**The study you are taking part in has to do with Channel One. We will watch a copy of Channel One and then answer some questions about it. THIS IS NOT A GRADE. No one will know your answers but you. All you need to do is answer the best you can. Any time you wish, you may leave the study and you will not be in trouble.**

**If you would like to participate, please SIGN your name below. (Do not print)**

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**Yes, I agree to participate in the study of Channel One.**

---

**Signature**

**Date**

**Appendix C**

**Questionnaires**

1. **Birthday:** \_\_\_\_\_

2. **Grade:** \_\_\_\_\_

3. **Race (check one):**  white  black  Hispanic  
 Asian

4. **Sex:** Male  Female

5. **What adults live in your house: List them.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. **What kind of work do the adults listed do?  
Please list the jobs in the same order as the  
adults.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Channel One Questionnaire

1. What does "U.N." stand for?
  - a. Union of Nerds
  - b. United Nations
  - c. United Newspaper
2. Where are the "U.N." headquarters?
  - a. London, England
  - b. Bonn, Germany
  - c. New York, New York
3. Which country is Somalia?
  - a. 1
  - b. 2
  - c. 3
4. Why are the soldiers going there?
  - a. Kill the tribal leaders
  - b. Protect the food and medicine
  - c. Teach the Somalis how to fight
5. What does HUMANITARIAN mean?
  - a. Helping people
  - b. not believing in God
  - c. Hurting people
6. What does MILITARY INTERVENTION mean?
  - a. The Army goes in and tries to fix the problem
  - b. The Army does nothing
  - c. Army is a part of the problem
7. Why is this mission special?
  - a. It's the first time soldiers have gone to Africa
  - b. It's the first military mission since Viet Nam
  - c. It's the first time the Army is being used to help people
8. How many Somalians have died this year?
  - a. 100,000
  - b. 5,000,000
  - c. 300,000
9. What is the U.N. Security Council?
  - a. The part of the U.N. that keeps secret papers
  - b. The part of the U.N. that keeps the peace and security of all nations
  - c. The part of the U.N. that deals with spies



10. How many Marines are going to Somalia?  
a. 50,000      b. 1 million      c. 1,800
11. What product was advertised in the first commercial?  
a. Borden's Ice Cream      b. Magnavox      c. Noxema
12. Why was the girl worried:  
a. She did not have a date  
b. She had a date  
c. Her sink had a leak
13. What fast food restaurant is in the second commercial?  
a. Fuddrucker's      b. McDonald's      c. Burger King
14. What movie is mentioned in the commercial?  
a. Malcolm X      b. Aladdin      c. 101 Dalmatians
15. What is special about the cup?  
a. It's green      b. It's black      c. It changes color
16. Where was the school prayer problem?  
a. Lubbock      b. Southlake      c. Deer Park
17. What group helped the student?  
a. Nirvana  
b. American Civil Liberties Union  
c. the Democrats
18. What does FREE SPEECH mean?  
a. That you do not have to pay to talk  
b. No one can stop you from saying what you want to say  
c. You can talk all you want today in class
19. What does the Rutherford Institute do?  
a. Helps schools find teachers  
b. Supports religious freedom  
c. Raises laboratory rats

20. What does CHAOS mean?
  - a. Confusion
  - b. Organized
  - c. Totally Cool
  
21. Why is sending troops into Somalia a historic decision?
  - a. It's the first time America has gone into Africa
  - b. It's the first time we've sent troops since Viet Nam
  - c. It's the first time we've sent troops on a humanitarian mission
  
22. What does VAGUE mean?
  - a. Easy to understand
  - b. Not clear in what it means
  - c. Hard to carry
  
23. When was the prayer done?
  - a. During Class
  - b. Basketball Game
  - c. Pep Rally
  
24. What does SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE mean?
  - a. Churches do not belong to Texas
  - b. Religion and Government should stay out of each other's business
  - c. Churches cannot be on the property of the State of Texas
  
25. What does FOUNDING FATHER mean?
  - a. A man who helped America get started
  - b. A man who has children and works in iron factory
  - c. A man who helps children today
  
26. Who is Thomas Jefferson?
  - a. President Clinton's uncle
  - b. A founding father and a former President of the U.S
  - c. A war hero
  
27. What does NEUTRAL mean?
  - a. When your room is clean
  - b. Helping another country that is at war
  - c. Not supporting either side in a fight

28. What does INITIATE mean?  
a. To begin using  
b. To turn off  
c. To boot up a computer
29. What brand of clothes are advertised in the last commercial?  
a. Guess b. Fruit of the Loom c. Starter
30. Where are the people in the commercial?  
a. Together at home b. At a party c. At school
31. A high school went without something to help Somalia. What was it?  
a. Movies b. Cokes c. Lunch
32. What kind of play was used to raise money to help Somalia?  
a. Thanksgiving b. Halloween c. Christmas
33. Who got the money?  
a. Red Cross b. Army c. President Bush
34. Which reporter would you like to be like?  
a. Craig Jackson b. Kathy Kronenberger  
c. Lisa Ling d. Hicks Neal
35. Why? Please put check marks beside reasons that you chose the reporter.

- This person is black  
 This person is white  
 This person is Asian  
 This person is female  
 This person is male  
 This person gets to travel  
 You like the way this person dresses  
 This person is older than the other reporters  
 This person is younger than the other reporters  
 This person is smart  
 This person is "cool"  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

36. What do you think about Channel One?

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